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ABSTRACT

The paper is one of a series from the Indian Directorate of Adult Education. Intended to stimulate reflection and discussion among educationists about the long-term perspectives, roles, and functions of universities in various aspects of adult continuing and nonformal education, the paper makes specific suggestions on opening universities to the world at large and to the surrounding communities in particular. The suggestions are made in five areas: (1) the responsibilities of universities in adult education at the basic level; (2) university responsibilities for continuing education programs; (3) the university role in promoting adult/continuing education as a discipline and research area; (4) program organization; and (5) funds. In conclusion, it is noted that the implementation of the suggestions involves some rethinking of traditional roles and functions of institutions of higher learning, some restructuring of university rules and regulations, and some reshaping of social and economic conditions for learning. Specific examples are briefly cited. (Author/AJ)

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UNIVERSITIES AND ADULT / CONTINUING EDUCATION

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Question Series-I

ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

DIRECTORATE OF NONFORMAL (ADULT) EDUCATION
Ministry of Education and Social Welfare
Government of India
New Delhi
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NOTE TO THE READER

Educational systems, both from the theoretical and practical aspects, are in a process of particularly vivid and dynamic evolution and transformations. Adult education concepts have also undergone tremendous changes in recent years. They reflect the growing realisation :

- that education is not a one-time experience, but a life-long process
- that any time is good time for education in one's life
- that education need not necessarily be continuous, but can be recurrent
- that education to be life-long and life-related can and should be combination of formal, nonformal and informal ways and approaches to learning practices
- that education should help to break down privileges, eliminate exploitations, and open opportunities.

How does adult education meet these needs ? What should be its objectives and thrusts ? How does it become life-long ? What form should it take ? and for whom ? When and how and for how long ? What is its place in the education system ? What are its potentialities and limits, if any ? What should be its structure ? Whose responsibility ?

The questions and issues raised are as fundamental and complex as the societal forces to which adult education has to respond.

Answers will need to be continuously searched for and found by those who are involved in the educational processes at various levels—adult learners themselves, with the help of sociologists, planners, politicians, academics, social workers, developmental agencies, etc. More important than finding answers is to keep eternally searching, probing and questioning.

We have started this 'Question Series' in an attempt to bring some of the big questions in the area of adult, nonformal, continuing education to the forum of academic discussion.

In this, the first of the *Series*, we discuss the role of universities in adult and continuing education.

The document is now before the readers.

READING IS REACTING

May we be favoured with your ideas, views, suggestions and criticisms—and hopefully more questions ?

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INTRODUCTION

That universities should extend their sphere of operation and academic activities beyond their walls, into the community, is now well recognised. Several universities have already started various programmes of adult/continuing education : some have established full-fledged departments of adult/continuing education ; others have organised a variety of extension education ; and still others have organised courses, evening and morning classes. Nevertheless, in spite of the laudable quality of existing programmes, the whole approach continues to be fragmented and unisided. There is also a growing interest in the idea of the 'Open University'. While that is an interesting and commendable pattern, which merits support and resources, here we are in reality discussing some specific aspects of the idea : how to 'open' the universities to the world at large and the surrounding communities in particular.

2. It has now become necessary to take stock of the situation and plan more comprehensive programmes of action, for the following reasons :

— the compelling urgency to bring about socio-economic transformation, through democratic and responsible participation of the people

— the need to accelerate developmental processes by enhancing human resources potential at all levels

— the continuing development of technologies and working techniques, as well as constant scientific investigations and new research findings, which makes acquired knowledge obsolete needing constant updating

— the recognition that if education opportunities are to reach all strata of society, they have to become more flexible, and should combine formal and nonformal processes so that citizens may have a continuous as well as recurrent access to education,

3. In such a context and starting from broadly conceived needs and objectives, the term 'adult education' related to various programmes involving universities or university students, the term which has unfortunately established an unhappy association of a type of 'inconsequential' education for 'inconsequential' people, should in reality

concern all those adults who are to participate in bringing about socio-economic, and socio-cultural transformations : a vast proportion of illiterates; a lesser proportion of semi-literates; a considerable proportion of literates ; and a limited group of the educated. Most of them will be employed at various levels of skills and semi-skilled and even unskilled occupation, will be raising a family, exercising franchise and participating in various civic and social roles. In other words, university adult/continuing education has to have and reach a much larger clientele than usually and traditionally considered.

4. The role of institutions for higher learning—in respect of non-conventional activities in fields of adult education or continuing education—could broadly, be envisaged with the following three dimensions :

A Support and contribution to adult education activities carried on *outside* the universities

B Development of education and training programmes, as well as expansion of learning facilities for adults *inside* universities and colleges

C Promotion of research, studies and training related to adult and continuing education *as a scientific discipline.*

5. The above classification would in a sense indicate the range of functions and responsibilities of universities in adult education, as :

— advisory and consultancy

— experimental and innovative

— training and orientation

— extension activities and recurrent education

— research and evaluation

— frontier thinking and developing future perspectives

6. A university can participate in adult education programmes through :

— its student body

— its different faculties

— its special faculty or department for adult education where it exists

7. However, it should be emphasised that institutions of higher learning should concentrate on those aspects of adult and continuing education which nobody else or no other agency could perform better or more efficiently.

A

Responsibilities of Universities in Adult Education at the Basic Level

8. In the context of the magnitude of the educational underdevelopment in the country, the national policy on adult education places priority emphasis on eradicating illiteracy in the first instance. Nevertheless, 'literacy programmes' are not and should not be limited to the acquirement of literacy skills. These programmes are for illiterates, but aiming to help them in understanding the world around them and to get knowledge, skills and attitudes to participate in changing their environments, including the skill of reading and writing as much as that is necessary for their human, social and professional promotion.

In other words, adult education programmes cannot be really compartmentalised into a literacy programme and a continuing education programme as is often done. In reality, adult education is a continuum, taking care of literacy needs, but incorporating knowledge and skill needs at the same time and having one common purpose running throughout, namely, *to help the individual play his full role as a citizen at any point of his educational or professional development.*

9. The number of illiterates and semi-literates being huge, it becomes obligatory to phase out the programme. Consequently, during the Fifth Five-Year Plan, priority is being given to the illiterates and semi-literates in the 15-25 age-group, as well as to those adult illiterates who are involved in or benefitting directly from some important developmental schemes.

The nonformal education programme for the age-group 15-25 is designed as a composite functional and environment-based programme which would include knowledge and understanding about the environment, elementary knowledge of health, nutrition, and sanitation, literacy skills built around behavioural and attitudinal change, family life education, and introduction to employment and self-employment.

Functional Literacy Programmes which are at present largely designed for farmer-learners, are nonformal education programmes intended for selective homogeneous,

occupational and interest groups. Such functional literacy programmes are now being developed for other homogeneous groups such as fishermen community, women's groups, urban slum dwellers, animal husbandry occupations, tribal areas and so on.

The implementation of these programmes is done through the State Governments. Central Government provides guidelines, coordinates, guides and evaluates. The functional literacy projects are fully financed by the Centre.

The Centre also provides funds for nonformal education in one district in each State.

While the Centre can provide overall global guidance, a programme which has to be richly diversified to meet different functional needs, requires local technical guidance and decentralised implementation.

10. The universities are specially suited, structured and staffed to provide to these programmes the needed professional and technical guidance through inter-disciplinary faculty teams. Such assistance will be especially valuable in :

(a) conducting the initial surveys of villages for indentification of learners' and community needs

(b) in developing curriculum and learning-teaching materials

(c) in organising training programmes for the implementing personnel below the district level such as supervisors and teachers

(d) in devising evaluative tests, and

(e) in carrying out evaluative studies of the programme at various points of implementation.

While it may be neither desirable nor practicable for universities as such to directly take on adult literacy or nonformal education programmes, it may however, be necessary to take up pilot/experimental projects of nonformal education in order to gain direct experience and knowledge of various aspects of implementing such programmes.

11. On the other hand, the student body has to be directly involved in a situation where a very large portion of the 15-25 age-group (the peer-group of students) are illiterate. It is a matter of national urgency to see that every college student realises his/her compulsion to share his/her privilege with his/her less educated mates. Apart from their contribution towards global educational attainments, the participation in such a matter would contribute to students' own education and social commitment.

There are already several programmes in universities and colleges involving students in literacy programmes, adult education activities, educational and cultural efforts at the base level both in rural and urban areas.

In earlier guidelines issued to the NSS coordinators, it was indicated that each volunteer who offers to do adult education work, should try to make at least five persons iiterate during his service either individually or in groups.

In the present context, it is felt that *every student, irrespective of his being enrolled in NSS or not, should commit himself to the promotion of at least five illiterate persons during the course of his under-graduate studies.* This programme may be implemented in all earnestness involving as much of the student body as possible.

12. These adult education programmes which institutions of higher learning or the students themselves are expected to take up, will not be mere literacy programmes, but will be composite programmes of non formal education including literacy as well as basic elements of environmental education, civics, social participation, health and hygiene, scientific knowledge, nutrition etc.

In other words, the content of an adult education/continuing programme would, be a mix of :

— literacy where needed

— reinforcement of litercy once it is gained

— knowledge of scientific, technological and social changes that occur constantly

— environmental and ecological education

— education such as would bring about behavioural and attitudinal changes

— upgrading of skills of various degree of sophistication

— mental, social and technical preparation for active involvement in solving problemes of direct interest to the learners

Obviously, the programme will need systematic organisation, guidance and supervision from the faculty. Technical and professional guidance is available both from the Directorate of Nonformal Education at Delhi and Education Department in the States as well as from various well-established and long-experienced voluntary organisations working in the field of adult education in all parts of the country.

B

University Responsibilities for Continuing Education Programmes

13. Although many universities, both in India and abroad, have instituted various programmes of continuing education, the range of their activities, the variety of their courses and the dispersion of their clientele is much too limited. Different reasons linked to demographic trends, scientific, technological, social and cultural advances, as well as those related to modifications in educational policies and objectives, are exercising direct and indirect pressures not only in view of expanding university continuing education, but more in view of 'opening' universities and colleges to the community in the larger sense. Therefore, the objectives of continuing education would be :

- to enhance the academic and professional qualifications of youth and adults through courses equivalent to degrees, diplomas and certificates
- to raise or add to the professional or occupational competence
- to facilitate those who got a degree or diploma a life-long updating of their knowledge or competence
- to promote socio-cultural and aesthetic interests and pursuits
- to raise the quality of life in the midst of the complexities of modern life
- to open new ways of higher learning to those who are already employed or have been hampered to get 'third level' education in the so-called 'regular' way
- to equalise opportunities for higher education especially for women, backward classes, and first generation learners
- to follow-up continuously the link with university alumni
- to respond to and reflect the learning requirements of a continuously increasing complex society, and

— in short, to constantly up-date and upgrade the knowledge and awareness of the community to new thought, trends, and information and directly and indirectly sensitise the society to the concepts of socio-economic and socio-cultural transformations and inter-actions that are happening every day.

In other words, continuing education is in reality designed to make university activities life-long. It is based on four assumptions :

(a) that universities are responsible not only for initial learning, but for further continuing and recurrent learning

(b) that every university graduate or even a postgraduate young professional does not end his education but only *begins* his intellectual life when he terminates his university courses

(c) that education should become 'success-oriented' and not 'failure-oriented'. With education becoming continuous, concepts of success and failure would have no more meaning, each individual moving to levels of achievement and success at his own pace and according to his own requirements

(d) that opening of universities to continuing education is bound to have impact on socio-economic and cultural forces around, which will in turn motivate, enlarge, and transform continuing education programmes and methodologies.

14. The above statement has implications for the structure, content, methods and techniques of continuing education :

— the curricula should be determined by the learning (personal, socio-cultural, vocational and occupational) needs and expriences of youth and adults rather than by pre-determined framework of formal, degree-bound courses

— an inter-disciplinary orientation is essential to make the programme move closer to communi', youth and adult interests and concerns ; a variety of educational experiences in different situations will need to be put into use to make a viable programme of continuing education

— the teaching faculty will need to undergo a total re-orientation towards their responsibilities not only to formal education, but to nonformal ways of education as well, to meet the complex learning needs of society

— the teaching responsibilities need not necessarily be confined to those within the university structure, but should draw, without prejudices and formalism, upon people from outside the university system so that different kinds of experiences may flow into the continuing educational programmes

— since continuing education is based on the explicit and implicit principle that the educational process does not end with the degree or diploma, h

participation of youth and adults in defining objectives, content and methods and assessment criteria of continuing educational process becomes central to the success of the programme.

15. Programme of continuing education will obviously be as varied in objectives, content and methods as the needs of the adult community, taken in its broadest sense. But from the methodological point of view, these programmes may be :

(i) correspondence courses leading to degrees, diplomas etc. of the same kind as the formal programmes ;

(ii) part-time courses through morning or evening or week-end sessions ;

(iii) correspondence and special courses not leading to diploma or degrees etc. ;

(iv) sequential courses through summer schools and sessions at convenient times of the year comparable to regular courses and leading to diplomas, degrees etc. ;

(v) correspondence courses supplemented by short campus courses, and field work ;

(vi) short courses, limited in scope and ranging from two to three months or even longer leading to certificates of value ;

(vii) short ad hoc programmes like seminars, laboratory work, workshops, demonstrations, field work of limited duration and purpose ;

(viii) serialised programmes of lectures, conferences and seminars ;

(ix) serialised publications including books, pamphlets, journals and bulletins and other extension services : etc.

16. Periodic assessments would need to be made of the needs of employment, industry, and the community, as well as of socio-cultural phenomenon, and appropriate courses will need to be devised to meet them.

In addition, flexibilities may also be introduced in some of the formal education programmes in universities to make these facilities available to the community. For example, some very interesting and useful courses are being organised by different faculties of universities which are at present attended by students and even faculty members of other disciplines. It should be made possible for non-student members of the community—at different levels of educational attainments, employed or otherwise—also to benefit from these courses through auditing, without incurring extra expenditure.

17. Flexibility is also needed to be introduced in devising continuing education programmes and in liberating them from the conventional inhibitions and limitations of formal educational structures, particularly since the learners, who will be seeking these programmes will, by and large, have a higher level of maturity, experience and motivation than students under-going formal education programmes.

C

University Role in Promoting Adult/ Continuing Education as a Discipline and Research Area

18. For the time being, the emphasis may be put particularly on : (i) research in various related disciplines like adult psychology, sociology, sociometry, anthropology, communications, economics of education etc ; (ii) evaluation of non-conventional educational programmes (methodology of evaluation ; tools and indicators ; measurement procedures, etc.) ; (iii) training of adult education cadres.

19. Many facets of the operation and implementation of the nonformal education programmes are today organised in an ad hoc manner without the necessary base of carefully tried-out and scientific methodology. *To build a viable and stable programme of nonformal education, it is essential to carry out well-designed action-research programmes* on aspects such as motivation of adults, the optimum duration of various types of adult education programmes, the psychology of various adult learner groups, literacy retention levels, community effectiveness of various methodologies and techniques, resource potentials, obstacles to life-long education, specific learning problems of various categories of adults, use of different methodologies and media in continuing education, economic and sociological relationship between initial and further or between formal and non-formal education etc.

20. **Such research studies would be taken up by several faculties** in universities. Identification of research problems could flow from various education programmes taken up by the universities as described earlier. Such research could also cover evaluative studies of on-going programmes both for programme improvement as well as for feed-back. The findings of these researches would then be available to Central and State governments, and various implementing agencies.

21. The biggest handicap under which adult education programmes are being implemented is the total absence of a professional cadre of trained adult education workers. The increasing role of nonformal education modalities envisaged in the educational strategies of the future, demand that we being today and now to build a solid cadre of workers who will possess the conceptual insights, technical know-how and professional competence required for such a programme.

Universities can play a crucial role in meeting this need by :

(a) instituting post-graduate and doctoral courses in adult/continuing/nonformal education, say, in one selected university in each State to start with ;

(b) introducing M-Ed. programmes in adult/continuing/nonformal education in post-graduate teacher training colleges ;

(c) introducing Bachelor's degree courses in Nonformal Education (e.g. Rajasthan University) ;

(d) introducing various aspects of adult/nonformal education as compulsory subjects in all teacher training institutions ;

(e) organising high level diploma/certificate training courses in adult/nonformal education ; and

(f) promoting doctoral/other research in related aspects of adult and nonformal education in teacher training colleges and university departments of sociology, education, psychology etc.

ORGANISATION

22. Adult/Continuing education programmes can be organised in universities in one of two ways :

— either they can be segregated in a separate faculty/department ; or

— they can be diffused in several faculties.

Since the basic philosophy underlying the concept of nonformal education is that it is more an *approach* to learning or a *way* of learning than a *system* of education or an educational *area*, to seclude if away from the general academic mainstream would defeat its very purpose. At the same time, for the special functions of research, cadre building, leadership training as well as for coordination and catalysing, a specialised organisation is also important.

The following suggestions would, therefore, seem to answer both these requirements :

(a) every faculty should have an in-built element of extension/continuing/nonformal education as an integral part of its programmes ;

(b) a small nonformal education/adult continuing CELL may be set up for the university as a whole under a senior faculty member and under the overall policy direction of the Vice-Chancellor, to coordinate nonformal education programmes in various faculties in the university, to ensure that this responsibility of the university is not lost sight of, and in general to act as a liaison ;

(c) in selected universities, may be one in each State or more according to necessity, special departments of adult/continuing education may be set up (there are already 13 such departments in different universities at present) to be responsible for training of high level cadre of workers necessary for various non-formal, non-conventional education programmes : planners, organisers, administrators, workers responsible for content preparation, materials and media, research, evaluation, experimentation and innovation, documentation services etc.

FUNDS

23. From the assumption stated earlier that nonformal education is the responsibility of every faculty, it follows that in the planning and programming of every faculty, the funding should take care of nonformal/continuing education responsibilities as well as of formal education.

However, additional funds would be required for :

(a) the setting up of the continuing/nonformal education cell as indicated above :

(b) setting up the departments of adult/continuing education ;

(c) undertaking special experiments and pilot projects in various aspects of continuing/nonformal education either by the Department of Adult Education or in other faculties,

The size and source of funding can be determined when the plan and programme of adult/continuing education is drawn up by the various universities taking into consideration the national directives as well as the State requirements.

The size of assistance which will be given by the Centre could then be worked out jointly by the Ministry of Education and the UGC.

CONCLUSION

24. It is obvious that all these considerations and suggestions are, in reality, going much further than mere aspects of adult/continuing education activities by and inside universities and colleges. The implementation of these suggestions, ipso facto, involves :

(a) some rethinking of traditional roles and functions of institutions of higher learning (subjects of studies ; linkage between scientific disciplines and working experiences ; inter-disciplinary approach to study and research etc.)

(b) some restrucuring of university rules and regulations(broadening of admission criteria ; possibilities for interchange of studies and work : opportunities for

recurrent higher education ; wider recognition of working life experiences ; facilities for distance education ; etc.)

(c) some reshaping of social and economic conditions for learning (incentives for learning ; involvement of factories, business and research institutes in dispensing facilities for 'third level' learning and training ; rules for job requirements ; recruitment procedures and criteria; study leave and promotion criteria ; adoption of social security, pension system and labour legislation; and professional relations in general in order to suit more appropriately the transformation of higher education institutions ; etc.)

25. These suggestions are made in the hope that they will stimulate reflection and discussion among educationists in general and the university, community in particular, about the long-term perspectives, roles and functions of universities in various aspects of adult/continuing and nonformal education. When such a consensus is reached, it will then be possible for the Centre, State Governments, universities and voluntary organisations as well as the entire academic community to jointly work on raising the level of consciousness, competence, confidence and participation of our people through a global educational approach.

The Directorate of Adult Education is the academic and technical wing of the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare in respect of matters relating to non-formal youth and adult education at the all-India level. It assists in the formulation, implementation, coordination and evalution of programmes initiated by the Government of India.

The main functions of the Directorate are :

- Training and orientation
- Production of learning materials
- Surveys and studies
- Documentation and clearing house functions
- Experimentation and innovation
- Promotional activities
- Consultative and advisory services
- Forum for pooling of experiences and exchange of ideas

The major on-going programmes are :

* Farmers' Functional Literacy Programme
* Nonformal Education Programme for the age-group 15-25
* Nehru Yuvak Kendra Programme (technical assistance to)
* Polyvalent Adult Education in urban areas
* Workers Social Education Institutes in urban areas
* Training and orientation of key personnel in adult nonformal educacion and youth work
* Documentation services to national and international agencies.

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